

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 04702 171649Z
ACTION EUR-08

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
COMUSFORAZ LAJES FLD AZORES

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4702

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS PINT PO
SUBJECT: MILITARY DISCONTENT

1. LAST NIGHT, JUNE 16, I HAD LENGTHY INFORMAL CONVERSATION
WITH AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF LEMOS FERREIRA. AS DEPT
AWARE, AIR FORCE HAS BEEN THE MOST PUBLICLY STRIDENT OF
THE SERVICES IN PUSHING THE CASE FOR EQUIPMENT. WHILE
IT HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN CONSIDERED THE MOST PRO-
WESTERN OF THE SERVICES, IT IS ALSO THE ONE MOST
SUSCEPTIBLE TO RIGHT-WING PRESSURES.

2. I TOLD LEMOS FERREIRA THAT I HOPED OUR RECENT
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AGREEMENT ON C-130'S WOULD HELP TO CALM SOME OF THE
ANIMATED SPIRITS IN THE AIR FORCE. I FOUND HIS RECENT
SPEECH AT A PARATROOP CEREMONY COUNSELING PATIENCE
CONSTRUCTIVE, AND I HOPED HE WOULD CONTINUE TO URGE
THAT HIS OFFICERS KEEP THE EQUIPMENT ISSUE IN
PERSPECTIVE. PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ON LACK OF PROGRESS
WERE NOT HELPFUL TO OUR COMBINED EFFORTS.

3. LEMOS FERREIRA SAID HE HAD TAKEN A STRONG POSITION WITH HIS OFFICERS, POINTING OUT TO THEM THAT THERE WERE MANY THINGS THEY HAD TO DO TO INCREASE THEIR OWN COMPETENCE. HIS GOAL WAS TO KEEP THEM BUSY IN ORDER TO KEEP THEIR MINDS OFF OF THEIR EQUIPMENT NEEDS. HE ALSO PLANS TO CHANGE THE TRAINING CYCLE IN PEACE TALON TO TRY TO REORIENT IT AWAY FROM F-5 TYPE TRAINING. NEVERTHELESS, HE NOTED, AN AIR FORCE CANNOT SURVIVE INDEFINITELY WITHOUT FIGHTER AIRCRAFT.

4. I TOLD HIM I WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS I HAD HEARD OF RISING DISCONTENT WITHIN THE MILITARY WITH REGARD TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION. I HOPED HE WAS MAKING CLEAR TO HIS OFFICERS THAT ANY DEVIATION FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PATH WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR PORTUGAL. I RECOGNIZED THAT THE MILITARY SOMETIMES BECAME IMPATIENT WITH POLITICIANS, BUT THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES HAD DONE THEMSELVES GREAT CREDIT BY WITHDRAWING TO THE BARRACKS AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME. RENEWED INTERVENTION COULD ONLY LEAD TO THE ISOLATION OF PORTUGAL FROM NATO AND THE WEST IN GENERAL. I WAS SURE MY OWN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT SUPPORT ANY EFFORT BY THE MILITARY TO ALTER PORTUGAL'S DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.

5. LEMOS FERREIRA SAID HE TOO HAD RECENTLY BECOME CONCERNED OVER POLITICAL RUMBLINGS WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. IN FACT HIS SPEECH AT THE PARATROOP CEREMONY HAD BEEN DIRECTED MORE TOWARD THIS ISSUE THAN

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EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS. FOLLOWING THE SPEECH HE ASSEMBLED HIS OFFICERS AND WARNED THEM AGAINST ANY THOUGHT OF INTERVENING IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. SOME WERE ARGUING IN FAVOR OF A GOVERNMENT OF "TECHNICIANS," BUT HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT THIS WOULD ONLY BE A FIRST STEP IN A PROCESS THAT WOULD INVOLVE THE MILITARY IN A SITUATION FROM WHICH THEY COULD NOT EXTRICATE THEMSELVES. HE HAD TOLD HIS OFFICERS IN CLEAR TERMS THAT THE MILITARY HAD TO PURSUE A PROFESSIONAL MISSION. IF THEY SOMEHOW THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE BETTER MANAGERS THAN THE POLITICIANS THEN THEY OUGHT TO DEVOTE THEIR ATTENTION TO MANAGING THEIR OWN ESTABLISHMENT BETTER.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH LEMOS FERREIRA RESPONDED POSITIVELY ON THE EQUIPMENT ISSUE, I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE HE MAY BE AT LEAST PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE AIR FORCE GRIPING. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE ISSUE OF MILITARY UNREST HAS REACHED A SERIOUS POINT, BUT, AS I KNOW FROM A SESSION I HAD WITH HIS CHIEF OF CIVIL

HOUSEHOLD, THE PRESIDENT IS BECOMING CONCERNED.
IT WAS CLEAR THAT LEMOS FERREIRA WAS CONCERNED AS
WELL. I BELIEVE LEMOS FERREIRA IS SINCERE IN TAKING
A STRONG POSITION ON A PROFESSIONAL MISSION FOR THE
MILITARY, AND I THOUGHT IT USEFUL TO GIVE HIM SOME
MORAL SUPPORT.
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